

Love

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Summary: Jonny and Jessie face hardships in their love lives.

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25 November, 1999 Disclaimer: I don't own any of the JQ characters.

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Jonny stared up at the stars up in the dark sky. He tried to make out a constellation but was unsuccessful. His worry made him look older than his twenty four years. His forehead was creased. He looked down at his fourth finger on his left hand and imagined seeing a ring there. A wedding ring. Dream on, Jonny, he told himself. You're here to break your marriage proposal with Jessie. He cracked his knuckles loudly. He loved Jessie very much but somehow he felt that breaking up was for the best. Suddenly he heard a sound behind him. Spinning around, he came face to face with Jessie. Her red hair caught the moon's light and looked like a blazing forest fire. Her lovely emerald eyes gazed at him lovingly as her hands caressed his face lovingly. God, she was beautiful. I wonder if making this sacrifice is worth it, he thought. "Hi, Jon. What did you want to talk to me about?" she asked, giving him that smile that never failed to melt his heart. It's now or never, thought Jonny, taking a deep breath to calm himself. His palms felt sweaty. A few beads of perspiration had formed on his head. "Jess, I think we should cancel the wedding." "But why Jonny?" she asked, looking both hurt and surprised. "Well, for one thing, it wouldn't be fair to all three of us. I know you love Brad as much as you love me and it wouldn't be fair to me and it is not fair for you to marry me but still love another. And it wouldn't be fair to Brad that you marry me instead of him although you love him too," said Jonny, trying to keep away any emotions from entering his voice and succeeding quite well. Jessie felt as if a pickup truck had hit her in the gut. "But Brad and I are only good friends. He's like a brother to me. I love you not him!" she said, shrilly. "Jess, you can't fool me. You've lied to yourself for a long time. Just admit it, you love him. It may have started out by being

good friends, the way we were before we started dating. But then, you both got closer and closer until one day you found out that you are in love with Brad," said Jonny, calmly. Jessie realised that what Jonny said was true and felt guilty that it was her fault that Jonny had decided break up. "How did you know?" she asked quietly. "I've known you for eighteen years. And I do not blame you for this. Just remember that. I don't blame you at all. Maybe we were just not meant to be together," said Jonny, blinking away a tear that had formed at the corner of his eye. By now, Jessie was crying. "W-w-w-what about our wedding?" she asked tearfully. "It's still on except that I've sent out new invitations that say it is between you and Brad. I'm still paying for it but I won't be there to witness it. I'm leaving for Hong Kong tomorrow night. I'll write when I have the time. Enjoy your life, Jessie," Jonny said. "Aren't y-y-y-you acting a little rash?" asked Jessie, sniffing. "Jessie, this isn't one of my last minute decisions. I've been thinking about it for a long time now. I won't regret it and I don't want you to regret it either," said Jonny in a controlled voice. "I know you love him very much." LIAR, his conscience screamed at him. Ignoring it, Jonny turned around and walked away. He regretted it already. He could still hear Jessie's sobs.

The next day, Jonny told his father and his extended family about his plans. They tried to talk him out of it but none of them could persuade him to reconsider. His bags were already packed. His mind was already made up. At seven o'clock at night, the whole Quest team was at the airport, including Brad. They bid Jonny goodbye as he walked over to the waiting room. Jonny had lied that his flight was the eight o'clock one. In truth, his flight was at twelve o'clock midnight. He couldn't bear face his family any longer. Especially Jessie. Jessie gave her dearest friend a tight hug before he left. She knew what a sacrifice he was making. They had planned this wedding for over two years. Hadji gave Jonny a small good luck charm and Dr. Quest gave his only son a bear hug and, surprisingly so did Race. Race was not famous for showing his feelings. Jonny shook hands with Brad and then walked away as quickly as he could, holding back his tears. Jonny made his way to the waiting room and sat down. In a few minutes, he had fallen asleep, dreaming about his happy moments with his family and friends. He woke up a little before twelve o'clock and heard the announcement for him to board the plane. The plane took off at twelve and Jonny bade a silent goodbye to his family.

Six Years Later

A small group of people stood around a freshly dug grave. Among them was red headed woman and a small child, a young man wearing a turban, an elderly man with brown hair and beard and a man in his late forties with white hair. Jessica Bannon Dolan stared at the tomb stone that stood at the head of the grave. It read Brad Michael Dolan, born on 30th June 1967, died on 26th May 1999. She wished that Jonny was here to support her in this time of need for the thousand time. The last letter she had received from him was two years ago. Almost as if on cue, Jonny suddenly appeared by her side. He held her hand gently. Jessie looked at Jonny and gave him a hug. "You're back," she said quietly. He returned the hug. "Yeah. Missed me?" She

simply nodded. Jonny stood silently by her side, never letting go of her hand. The service ended a few hours later. The silent procession dressed in black and white made their way towards the car.

"My friend, why haven't you written to us for such a long time?" enquired Hadji, caressing his dark beard with his hand the same way Dr. Quest always did. "I've been travelling around. I just got back from Bangkok when I read your e-mail. I rushed here immediately," said Jonny, rubbing the two day stubble on his face. He looked up and saw Jessie looking at him. He pretended to be interested in his finger nails. He had avoided making eye contact with Jessie, whom he still loved with all his heart. "My son, you could still send e-mail with your laptop. Why didn't you asked Benton, giving his son a meaningful look. "Sorry, Pops. I dropped my laptop and it kinda broke," said Jonny. The little blond girl that had been clinging to Jessie's arm, suddenly walked up to Jonny and said, "Uncle Jonny, can I sit on your lap?" She looked at his face hopefully. Jonny picked her up with his strong arms and placed her on his knee. He suddenly realised that she looked a lot like him. "How did you know my name?" he asked gently. "Mommy told me about you. She always tells me about all your adventures together when you were young. They make better bedtime stories than fairy-tales," she said. "'Sleeping Beauty' is so lame." Jonny smiled at her and then turned his attention to Jessie. He looked at her questioningly. "Joanne saw an old photo of you on the table and asked me who the person in the picture was. I told her about you and the crazy things you have done," said Jessie. "Uncle Jonny, is it true that you and mommy were trapped in an underwater lab and were being chased by sea creatures?" she asked curiously. "Yes, that is true, Joanne," he said, looking at her fondly and bumping her on his knee. "Wow! I wish that I will have adventures like that," she said, enthusiastically. "She's very much like you, Jessie," he said. Jessie gave him a look that seemed to say, "She's very much like you too." Race who had been silent all this while suddenly spoke. "Why don't you all let Jonny take a shower first and then we can continue this interrogation over dinner. It's getting close to dinner time. You haven't changed Jonny. You still forget the time and you are always late for these and that." Jonny blushed and picked Joanne off his knee and put her on the seat next to him and got up and stretched. Then he got up and went to the room that used to be his. Nobody used it so it still looked the same minus the usual mess. But I can take care of that, he thought, unbuttoning his shirt and flinging it to a corner. Then he went to take a shower.

Bandit had just returned from the vet. He had just underwent minor surgery a few days ago. As soon as entered the front door, he smelt the scent of his beloved whom he hadn't seen for six years. He gave an excited bark and raced all the way to Jonny's room. Jonny heard an exciting scraping at his door. He got up and opened the door and was immediately hit in the gut by an excited dog. Bandit! "Bandit, stop. Stop, Bandit," he said, trying to fend the dog off him as Bandit licked his face. Jessie who had fetched Bandit home from the vet heard the commotion and ran all the way upstairs. When she saw Jonny being attacked by Bandit. "Sorry, Jonny. I couldn't stop him in time. He just ran away from me when he smelt you." At last, Jonny managed to push Bandit away from him. He got up and dusted himself. His black T-shirt and blue jeans reminded Jessie of Jonny when he was fourteen.

He had just shaved making him look even more like his old self. "So Jonny, are you back to stay or are you returning to Hong Kong?" she asked. "I think I will stay here for a while. Anyway Jessie, do you want to go on a picnic? Just the two of us. We have a lot of catching up to do," said Jonny. "Okay. When?" she replied. "What about two tomorrow afternoon?" he asked. "Sure." "Hey, you two. Are you coming down or what?" yelled someone. "Coming, dad!" shouted Jonny. Jonny was bombarded by questions again as soon as he took his seat.

The next day, at about two in the afternoon, a BMW convertible left the Quest Compound. A guy was driving and a girl was talking to him. Jessie looked at Jonny. He looked so handsome in his black T-shirt and jeans and Ray Ban sunshades. Jonny turned around and saw her looking at him and he gave her a smile that flashed his white teeth. God, she's even more beautiful than before. I must have been insane to let her go like that, he thought, noting her brilliant red hair and emerald green eyes. "Jessie, can I ask you a personal question?" Jonny asked, his smile disappearing. "Um, sure. I guess," she said uncertainly. "How did Brad die?" Jonny asked, gently. He didn't want her to get upset. "You don't have to answer if you don't want to." "It's okay. He met in an accident. He was killed instantly so he did not suffer," Jessie said softly. They drove to the beach silently and had a great picnic. By the time they were driving home, things seemed to have gone back to normal. Jonny didn't feel nervous when Jessie was around anymore. They got home at about five o'clock. Hadji was playing with Joanne. She was chasing Bandit around the huge garden. When he saw them pull up on the driveway, he ran over to them, looking exhausted. "That daughter of yours is a monster. What do you feed her with? Steroids?" he said to Jessie. Jessie laughed at her friends remark. She was taking Brad's death pretty well. In fact, she had been acting pretty normal. She still laughed and joked. "What happened to you, Hadji? You look like you have been hit by a thunder storm or a tornado," commented Jessie. "Worse. I've just been bulldozed by Jo and Bandit," said Hadji curtly. "Well, you survived didn't you, Hadji?" said Jonny, slyly. "Well, I've put up with worse. You and Jessie were worse. Or maybe it's just that she is younger than the two of you," said Hadji. "Anyway, dinner is being served as we speak. Where have the two of you been?" "At the beach," answered Jonny. Hadji gave Jessie a questioning look. "Hadji, I'm still in mourning!" said Jessie, punching her friend's arm playfully. Then she tugged him into the house. She could already smell the flavourful aroma of the roast chicken the maid said she would cook.

That night as Jonny was flipping through a paperback, he heard a sound coming from the room next to his. That used to be the guest room but now it was Joanne's room. He got up and slipped a T-shirt over his head and padded to the next room. Jonny opened the door quietly and slipped inside. He looked around and saw that the room had been decorated with a nursery rhyme wallpaper and several shelves had been erected and stuffed toys and books had been arranged neatly on them. In the corner stood the bed and on it sat Joanne with a blanket wrapped around her. She was shivering. "Joanne, are you cold?" he asked gently, in a soothing voice. "Who is that? Daddy?" she asked hopefully, in a voice so soft that Jonny could hardly hear her. "No, it's Uncle Jonny. Your daddy is not here. What's the matter?" said Jonny, still in his soothing voice. Must be my maternal

instinct working overtime, thought Jonny. He switched on the bedside lamp. "I had a bad dream. It was really scary. That's why I called for mommy. Why are you here Uncle Jonny?" she said, not sounding so frightened anymore. "I heard you calling. What did you dream about?" asked Jonny, sitting down beside her on the bed. He stroked her hair, gently. "I dreamed that I was being chased by a vampire. He was so ugly and worse of all, he stank," said Joanne, giving a tiny giggle. "But I don't feel scared anymore with you here," she said looking into his eyes with her clear blue eyes that were so much like his. "Do you want to go back to sleep?" asked Jonny, struck again by the fact that she looked so much like him.. She nodded her head. Jonny tucked her in and reached out to switch off the lamp. "Uncle Jonny, can you tell me a story before you go?" she asked timidly. "But it better be good or you have to tell me another story," she added with a sly look. "Okay. I'll tell you one of my absolutely insane adventures with your mother," said Jonny, adjusting his position. Then he started his story. Jonny didn't realise that he was being watched by a silent figure outside Joanne's room.

Jessie watched as Jonny told Joanne about one of their adventures together. She looked at Jonny's curly blond hair fondly. She was still in love with him but she refused to admit it. After making sure that Joanne was in reliable hands, she retired to her room.

"The end," said Jonny as he ended his story. By now, Joanne was half asleep. Jonny kissed her on the head and switched off the lamp and left the room quietly. He entered his own room and went to sleep. Bandit shifted his position and settled comfortably in his basket. Then all was calm in the Quest Mansion.

"Good morning, everyone," greeted Jonny, as he entered the dining room. He could smell the strong aroma of black coffee. Everyone at the table looked up from their breakfast and returned the greeting. "There's some coffee left in the pot, son," said his father. "You know I hate coffee, Dad," said Jonny, as he reached into the fridge and grabbed a carton of milk and poured himself a glass. Then he reached for a box of cereal on the top shelf. "Oops! Sorry, son. I forgot that you hated coffee. I thought by now you would have changed," said his dad. "Never mind. So what are we doing today?" asked Jonny, changing the subject. "We're working today as it is Monday. And you the lucky pig will be roaming the countryside because you're on vacation," said Jessie. She was dressed in a white silk blouse and dark blue jacket and slacks. Her hair was pulled back into a bun. She looked very elegant. "Yeah, whatever. Anyway, Jess, what time does Jo's school end? I thought I would pick her up today since I'm going to be roaming the countryside, as you so delicately put it," said Jonny. "You can pick her up at one. But make sure she does her homework before she goes out and play," said Jessie, giving Jonny a look that said, "My orders are to be obeyed." "No prob, Jess," said Jonny, giving her a smart salute. "And I thought you would have grown up," said Jessie, rolling her eyes. "Well, I must be going. Bye." Just then, a horn blared. "That's my bus," yelled Joanne, as she grabbed her bag and ran out of the front door.

Jonny ran his fingers through his curly blond hair. He had arrived at Joanne's school fifteen minutes early. Suddenly the school bell rang. Jonny straightened his black turtleneck sweater and dodged the stampede of excited children. He spotted Joanne and waved to her. She waved back and ran towards him. "Hi, Uncle Jonny!" she said. "Hi," he said as he opened the car door for her. She stepped into the car and sat in the passenger seat. Jonny entered through the other side and started the engine. He shifted gears and drove off. "Uncle Jonny, are you married?" Joanne asked curiously as she tugged off her baseball cap. She was also a tom boy like her mother. Jonny recognised that cap. He had given it to Jessie when she was seven years old. No wonder it was so old looking. "No, I'm not married. I nearly was but it didn't work out." "Have you ever thought of marrying my mommy?" asked Joanne, looking innocently at him. This is not exactly the easy ride I thought it would be, thought Jonny. "Maybe," he answered. Joanne looked at him with a funny look on her face. Jonny avoided her eyes for a little while. "Why don't you ask her out?" suggested Joanne. This kid is pretty mature for her age, thought Jonny. "I don't know." The rest of the journey home was made in silence. Jonny made sure that all of Jessie's orders were obeyed. He even helped Joanne with some sums she didn't understand. After that, she played with Bandit as he read the newspapers in the garden. "How old are you, Joanne?" Jonny asked, curiously. "Nearly six. My birthday is this Sunday," she replied. "Why do you want to know, Uncle Jonny?" she asked, looking at him as if she was analysing some micro-organism under a microscope. "So I can buy a birthday present for you. So what do you want for your present?" Jonny said. "Well, I've always wanted a new baseball mitt. Everyone buys me stuffed toys and books. They want me to act more like a girl," she said, making a face. "What colour do you want?" asked Jonny. "I like brown. Reminds me of a huge cuddly teddy bear," Joanne said. "I thought you didn't like stuffed toys," commented Jonny. "I didn't say I didn't like stuffed toys. I said that everyone gives me stuffed toys for my birthday," said Joanne, daring Jonny to continue the debate. "Okay, okay. I get it." "Hi, you two!" yelled someone. Jonny, Joanne and Bandit turned around and saw Hadji walking towards them. Bandit gave an excited bark and ran to Hadji, tripping him neatly. Jonny and Joanne laughed loudly. Hadji tried to pick himself up and still look dignified but Bandit knocked him down again and started licking him. At last he managed stand up. He picked up his unraveled turban and scolded Bandit. "So, Hadj, why are you home so early?" asked, looking surprised. "I finished work early today. So, instead of staying back to chat, I thought I would come home and relax by the television. But instead, I return just to be attacked by a crazy mutt," Hadji replied. Bandit whined at Hadji's remark. "Okay. Crazy pooch then," said Hadji. "Come on Joanne. Time for you to get cleaned up for dinner," said Jonny, tugging her by the arm. "I don't want to go. I want to play with Bandit," she whined. "No you can't. You can play with Bandit later. It's time for your bath now," Jonny said, trying to pull the stubborn girl to her feet. "I'm not budging," said Joanne, in a sing-song voice. "Yes you are!" said Jonny, as he scooped her up in his arms and walked towards the house. Joanne screamed and punched his solid chest with her small fists half-heartedly. At last Jonny plonked her on her bed. "Now, go and take a bath!" he commanded. Joanne meekly walked to the bathroom and took a bath. Jonny turned around and saw Hadji standing at the door frame looking at him with awe. "How did you do that, my friend? Normally, it takes us about ten minutes to convince her to get into the bathroom and another ten minutes to get

her wet and get ourselves wet too," Hadji said with amazement in his voice. "I don't know. Maybe I remind her of her father," said Jonny. This brought another funny look from Hadji. Then he and Jonny made their way downstairs. They could still hear Joanne singing as she took her bath. Jonny decided to ask Jessie a very important question the first chance he got. The little matter had been buzzing around in his head and now it was a full blown problem. Jonny busied himself by reading a magazine while Hadji watched his favourite sitcom on television. As he was reading an interesting article, Hadji suddenly roared with laughter. Jonny looked up from his magazine and saw a woman singing 'Jingle Bells' and stripping on the T.V screen. "Well, I think it's my turn to take a bath," Jonny said, as he got up and stretched his body. Hadji turned around and simply nodded and refocused his eyes on the T.V set. Jonny walked up the steps slowly, thinking of the most suitable way to approach Jessie with his problem. He undressed slowly and took a long hot shower, enjoying the feeling of hot water against his skin. Wrapping a towel around his waist, he selected a white button down shirt and a pair of black slacks. He brushed his hair and went downstairs. Jessie had just arrived and she was watching T.V with Hadji. Joanne was rolling on the carpeted floor with Bandit. His father was tinkering around with his laptop as usual. Race was sipping tea from a cup and reading the newspapers. The whole scene was so familiar, so much like how it used to be before he left. "Dad, is there a place in Quest Enterprises for me? I've been back for a few days now and I'm getting pretty bored. I was wondering if I could work there," said jonny, looking at his father hopefully. "There is an opening that would be suitable for you. When do you want to start work, son?" said Benton. "Would tomorrow be appropriate, dad?" Jonny asked. "Sure son," said Benton, and he turned back to his laptop. Dinner was served half an hour later. Jonny prepared his conversation with Jessie as he chewed on his roast beef. I hope I have the guts to say all this things, he thought. His chance came that night as he stood at the edge of the cliffs that overlooked the ocean. The sound of the waves crashing on the jagged rocks below him was deafening but he didn't realize. He was so deep in thought that he didn't hear Jessie walk up behind him. "Hi Jonny!" she greeted. Jonny was so surprised that he nearly loss his balance. "Oh, hi Jess," he said softly. It's now or never, he thought. "Jess, can I ask you a personal question?" he asked. "Sure, Jon," she replied. Jonny took a deep breath and said, "Is Joanne my daughter too, Jess? She looks so much like me. it's like looking into a mirror." Jessie looked at Jonny with a look that he couldn't understand. "I prefer not to answer that question, Jonny. Please don't ask me that question again until I'm ready," she said with a pleading look in her eyes. Jonny not wanting to push her just nodded his head. Jessie turned away and walked back towards the house, leaving him to stand alone to sort out his thoughts. Nice going, Quest. You really hit the jackpot. Not only have you not gotten any answers but now you have just messed up one of your greatest friends thoughts, he said to himself. Jonny stood by the cliffside for a little while longer before entering the house. He would have to wait until Jessie was good and ready before he could get any answers. He went to bed early that night. The next morning, he followed his father to the Quest Enterprises building. He started work on that very day and was very busy for the entire week. He forgot all about his problems as he worried about how the company was doing financially.

ONE YEAR LATER

Jonny lay down the cool grass as Joanne played a little ball with Race. The mitt he had given her for her sixth birthday looked pretty worn out as she had played baseball with Race almost everyday. Looking at Joanne running around reminded him of his unanswered question. He decided to confront Jessie on that very day.

Jessie stood in the greenhouse, staring at the stars. She had received a note from Jonny, asking her to meet him at the greenhouse at nine o'clock that night. He's late as usual, she thought. Just then she heard the sound of foot steps. Suddenly Jonny appeared in front of her. "Hi, Jess," he said. "This better be good, Jon, or I'll kill you. I'm missing a few minutes of my favorite T.V show for this," she said. "Jessie, I asked you this question a year ago and I think that you're ready to answer it," Jonny said, with a determined look on his face. "What is it, Jonny?" she asked. "Is Joanne my daughter too?" Jonny asked. "I prefer not to answer that question," said Jessie in a cold voice. "Just answer the simple question. I deserve to know. Please be fair, Jessie. Just answer the question. Is Joanne my daughter too or not?" said Jonny, his voice rising several octaves. Jessie thought for a little while and finally said, "Yes." Jonny stared at her. Then he suddenly blurted out, "Why didn't you tell me?" "I didn't want to trouble you anymore. I thought you didn't love me anymore and that's why you just gave me away to Brad. And Brad was so happy to be a father that I didn't think it was necessary to tell you," screamed Jessie. "I've never stopped loving you. You think it was easy to do what I did?" screamed back Jonny. "Then why did you do it?" said Jessie, calming down. She had never seen Jonny this emotional before. "Because it wouldn't be fair to all three of us if you married me but still loved Brad. I was not sure I could take it. So I thought I would just step away and break the love triangle," said Jonny, lowering his voice. "I would have chosen you. I loved you with all my heart and I still do," blurted out Jessie. Suddenly Jonny reached down and turned Jessie's face towards his and kissed her on the lips. Jessie wanted to push him away but it felt so right to kiss him. Finally Jonny pulled away. "Jess, this is the second time I'm asking you this question. Will you marry me?" he asked, as he got on his knees. "YES!" screamed Jessie, not hiding her happiness. She pulled him up to his feet and kissed him on the lips, not aware that the rest of the Quest Team was watching them.

THREE MONTHS LATER

It was a beautiful Sunday morning and the entire church was filled with relatives and friends. Flowers decorated every single corner of the room. Everyone was here to witness the much delayed wedding of Jonny Quest and Jessie Bannon. Race sat down next to his ex-wife who was sobbing softly after handing Jessie over to Jonny. He patted her hand gently and she managed a weak smile. They watched solemnly as Jonny and Jessie exchanged their vows. "I do," said Jonny. He looked very handsome in his suit and he looked over at Jessie. She was drop-dead gorgeous in a simple white wedding gown. "I do," said Jessie. "And now I pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the br.....," said the priest, but Jonny and Jessie were already locked in a tight embrace and kissing deeply. The crowd cheered and

Joanne ran up to the newly wed couple and said, "Uncle Jonny, can I call you daddy?" Jonny laughed. "Sure, you can," he said and he picked her up and placed her on one of his broad shoulders. Outside, the bouquet was thrown and photos were snapped. Then Jonny hugged his father and the rest of his family. Jessie did the same. Then they made their way to the stretch limousine. Jessie read the card that was stuck behind the limo and made a face. She glared at her father, Hadji and Benton who all gave her innocent looks. The card read, 'Just Married..... Finally after 7 years.' Then she smiled and gave all of them a hug again. She hugged her weeping mother too before getting into the car with Jonny. They were headed towards the airport where they would catch a plane to the Bahamas for their honeymoon. Jonny and Jessie waved at their relatives and friends through the open windows. Then they locked in another kiss as Joanne shouted goodbye to her mother and 'new' father. They waved back and Jessie blew kisses.

THE END

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